



State Rehabilitation Council

Nebraska Department of Education
301 Centennial Mall South • PO Box 94987 • Lincoln, NE 68509

Country Inn & Suites
5353 North 27th
Lincoln, NE
October 10, 2006
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Present: *Debra Bauer, Don Crouch, Alvin Fox, Marc Hultine, Jason Kerkman, Les Kimmons, Frank Lloyd, Larry Niemeyer, Mike Newman, Kipp Ransom, Vicki Rasmussen, Mark Schultz, Pearl Van Zandt, Merwyn Vavrina, and Terry Lee Wilson*

Absent: *Sharon Bloechle, Kim Boyce, Linda Douglas, Gayle Hahn, and Sandy Ham*

Minutes by *Cheryle Adams*

Public Notice published in the Lincoln Journal Star, Sunday October 1, 2006

Pearl Van Zandt called the meeting to order

I Public Comment: Coat left out at Developmental Disabilities—see Don to claim coat

II. Approval of Agenda

Break for committee meetings at 12:00

Removal of New Business item G from agenda

Motion made by Vicki to approve agenda as revised. Alvin seconded the motion.
The motion carried, agenda approved.

III. Approval of Minutes from August 15, 2006

Motion made by Alvin to approve the August 15th minutes. Mark seconded the motion.
Motion carried, agenda approved.

IV Director's Report (*Frank Lloyd*)

Frank extended his appreciation to council members for attending and assisting with the council work. Director's report is not being sent out with the agenda and minutes for the council members to review before the meeting.

Change in Director's Report: Since the Director's Report tends to be "a little long"; I've decided to send Council members a brief summary of the report prior to the meeting. This will give council members time to think of questions they want to ask at the meeting. In general, I try to provide enough information in the director's report so SRC members will know what ideas and changes we're thinking about, planning for, implementing or have completed. So you

should expect to see a topic or issue appear several times in the Director's report as the issue or project progresses.

Even with six SRC meetings a year, it is difficult for Council members to give input on all the issues we are addressing and improvements that are being considered. I hope the summary report in advance will help you become more aware of the improvements and enhancements we're considering and how our various projects and initiatives are progressing.

1. ***Interpreter Mentor Program:*** Voc Rehab is providing funds to support a 12 month mentoring program recently developed by the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of hearing. The Commission will select and train seasoned sign language interpreters and deaf individuals to mentor sign language students. The goal is to increase the number of qualified interpreters in the state.
2. ***Interpreter Scheduling Database:*** Voc Rehab is providing funds to help the commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing develop a web-enabled database to schedule interpreters throughout the state. The database will increase the availability of interpreters through more timely and efficient automated scheduling to replace the current manual system.
3. ***Interpreter Signing Via Video Link:*** Voc Rehab has acquired instant messaging capability through iChat. This includes audio, video and text messaging. An interpreter will be available on Tuesdays (2 hours) and Thursday (2 hours) to sign for consumers who are deaf via a link with our offices throughout the state. There are no line costs for the sessions since we are using State lines that are needed for our statewide data system. We have already paid for the lines and can use them as much as we need. This new service will increase the availability of interpreters for deaf consumers. It will also be very easy for staff to schedule using our Meeting Maker calendar system. And staff won't have to Authorize for the service since the interpreter will be paid by contract through the State Office. Pat Bracken is heading up this project.
4. ***Consumer Services Pamphlets:*** Voc Rehab is writing a series of consumer service pamphlets to emphasize services directly available from VR staff. The SRC has already seen drafts of 3 pamphlets: Job Seeking Skills, Job Placement, and Employment Warranty. Shortly the SRC will have 3 others to review. They include: Employment Planning, Social Security Benefits Planning, and Assistive Technology. We all 6 pamphlets have been reviewed they will be printed as a set.
5. ***CSAVR Futures Update:*** The Council of State Administrator for Vocational Rehabilitation have been holding national stakeholder meetings to develop a vision for Voc Rehab that will create a long-term agenda for change. More information will be provided to the SRC as this significant venture progresses. A couple of issues that are being considered and are significant for Nebraska Voc Rehab are:
 - a. How can the VR system be changed to help consumer's secure employment quickly and effectively?
 - b. Should VR agencies be allowed to provide no-cost services to individuals who are not on a priority list to be served, under Order of Selection OOS?

- c. How can VR improve and expand partnerships, effectively collaborating with employers, consumer groups, and others, in the development of policy, advocacy and implementation of VR services?
6. ***Emerging Leaders Project:*** Voc Rehab has invited staff to submit their name as an Emerging Leader. We are offering management and leadership training opportunities for these staff. The Department of Education is developing a Leadership Academy that will also provide training opportunities for our Emerging Leaders.
7. ***Employment Warranty Monitoring Update:*** We are starting a pilot project to provide Employment Warranty Monitoring through a central person who will be under contract with Voc. Rehab. We believe the process will give us a way to improve the follow-up calls since they will be made during the evening, weekends, as well as during the day as needed. We have developed a sequence of questions that will provide consistent information during the follow-up call so we can refine the process over time. Pat Bracken is heading-up this project in collaboration with our data processing staff.
8. ***Lincoln Office Move:*** The pre-bid conference for the Lincoln Local Office has been completed. We expect several bids during the next few weeks and plan to reach a decision by November 1, 2006. We are not bound by these bids and will only move if we feel that the office arrangement can be significantly enhanced. Both the Lincoln VR offices depending on the availability of space in the accepted bid. Mark Schultz had provided detailed assistance in developing the space requirements. Dan Delaney is coordinating the electrical and data process, wiring and network requirements.
9. ***Madonna Partnership Update:*** The Madonna Partnership is part of our effort to reach underserved populations who experience a physical disability. Thus far, we have seen about 25 consumers. About half were interested in pursuing planning and possible services through Voc. Rehab.

Our partnership with Madonna is now expanding to the Mild TBI program at Madonna. Nearly 80% of brain injuries are mild. Of these, up to 80% are not initially recognized and treated. The individual with mild TBI may experience anxiety, depression, intellectual impairments, poor concentration, memory difficulties, etc. Undiagnosed, individuals with mild TBI can experience severe problems in their personal life and employment. We are exploring with Madonna staff how we can help these individuals return to work or maintain their employment. Dennis Kind is coordinating this partnership.

10. ***Multimedia Projects Update:*** Kelli Funk, the multimedia specialist with Voc Rehab is currently finishing the Computer Basic Training for new staff. Future projects include [1] An Overview of VR for consumers and the public [2] Assistive Technology Overview, [3] Orientation to VR for consumers that are considering making application for Voc Rehab services.
11. ***National VR Business Network Update:*** Jim Coyle is our “point of contact” for the National VR Business Network. Standards for participation in the network are being developed, i.e. What is our response time to employer inquiries? What services must a Voc Rehab agency assure will be provided? Through a “one-company” approach, the Network

is developing a marketing plan, an internal communication system, and a website for external customers and stakeholders.

12. ***New Staff Training Update:*** The New Staff Training Committee is developing a sequence of training activities that can be completed in the local office. These will complement classroom training that we will continue to offer new staff. Some of the activities will take the staff person into the community, others will be in multimedia format through our data network [i.e. Directors Welcome, a 5-minute video that the employee will view at their computer followed by a discussion with their office director on the first day of employment.

Other activities will include paper and pencil worksheets and problem solving activities regarding all aspects of their work responsibilities. Each new employee will receive a portfolio, which will contain their job description, a list of critical skills that we expect them to acquire during their first year of employment. In addition the portfolio will accumulate multiple worksheets, and evaluation of their performance throughout their probationary period of employment. Pat Bracken, Larry Niemeyer, and Melanee Petersen are working with staff throughout the state to develop the materials.

13. ***Partnership Update:*** At the recent Leadership meeting [September 26 and 27] Office Director's presented information on the development of partnerships through their team. I believe that most of the consumers who come to us for services are facing multiple employment and life situations, which require collaboration, and multiple services. Many of these individuals cannot be effectively served "through a caseload approach only". It requires collaboration with other entities that also share our concern for employment. These entities bring additional supports and services that we can't provide.

The Juvenile Justice program with support from HHS and Omaha Public Schools is an excellent example. These youth could not be effectively served without the controls and tracking provided by HHS, or the GED preparation that is provided by Omaha Public Schools. Partnerships are being developed with employers, schools, mental health providers, community programs, state agencies, etc. More information can be provided at future SRC meetings.

14. ***Placement Committee Update:*** The Job Seeking Skills training booklet has a new look. Sandy Ham will give a copy to each Council member at the upcoming SRC meeting.

The Voc Rehab Placement Committee is in the final stages of implementing new standards for our placement program. The standards include a new Job Search Strategy form to ensure a consistent level of service from team to team, as well as maximize the placement effort.

15. ***Region VII Employment Conference:*** Nebraska Voc Rehab is working with the VR agencies in Missouri, Iowa and Kansas to develop an employment conference for VR staff that do placement. The conference is scheduled for summer 2007 in Kansas City and will focus on best practices, marketing to local employers and linking with the National VR/Business Network. Jim Coyle is our representative on the planning committee.

16. ***RSA State Plan Update:*** We have been notified that our State Plan has been approved by RSA with the assurance that the Higher Education agreements will be signed by September 31, 2007.

The Program Improvement Plans for our FY 2004 review have been submitted. The PIP's are our response to not achieving some of the Indicators on our Standards for FY2004. All but 1 Indicator was achieved in FY2005 which made submitting the PIP's an after the fact formal exercise. Based on our 4th quarter projections we expect to achieve all the standards in FY2006.

17. ***TeamMates:*** Voc Rehab is entering into a partnership with TeamMates. With more than 2,500 TeamMate Mentors statewide. Voc Rehab is coordinating with TeamMates to provide vocational support for students who experience a disability. Voc Rehab is also considering sponsoring selected Voc Rehab staff to be mentors for students with disabilities through the TeamMates program. Jim Coyle has made arrangements for Congressman Osborne to speak at our State Training Meeting this October about the TeamMates program.
18. ***VR Leadership Meeting:*** The Voc Rehab leadership will meet September 26th & 27th to discuss a variety of topics, some of which included: Mental Health Supported Employment Agreements, Transition services, New Staff Training resources production goals, progress in meeting the FY2006 Standards and Indicators and critical factors in operating a state-wide program with the shifting demographics in Nebraska. NDE Legal Council also provided more training on our responsibilities for employee accommodations under ADA and instruction on developing effective Corrective Action Plans for staff who are not adequately performing their work responsibilities.
19. ***VR Staff Meeting:*** Twice a year Margy and I meet with each of the Employment Teams. In the spring we tour the state and meet with each team separately. In the fall, Mel Bargas [HR Administrator for Voc Rehab] joins us and we meet with each staff person privately and discuss issues of concern to the agency as well as the staff person. We will start the fall tour October 23rd and finish in late November. We have found this annual activity to be informative and appreciated by staff.

V. Old Business

A. None

VI. New Business

A. Madonna Project (*Jan Stortenbecker*)

Jan is a career planner with VR. Through the Madonna Project, VR works primarily with the day rehabilitation program. It would be working with those consumers that are having extensive rehabilitation in hopes of re-entering the community and work. Some of these people had jobs at the time, so they are interested in working. VR goes into day program 1/2 day a week working with the individuals. VR is looking at ways to help them transition back into work and the community. ATP assists with equipment and

modifications, looking at ways to help them back into employment. This provides early intervention with consumers and letting them know that VR is a resource.

VR has already assisted several farmers, putting them in touch with Agribility helping assist them back into the farming. The largest population is the stroke population.

One example Jan gave was about a young man who was in a motorcycle accident and has a traumatic brain injury. He is in the construction trade and wants to go back to school. VR has worked with him, he has returned to a construction job this last month and is now working full time.

He is still being seen at Madonna in their outpatient program. He is interested in going back to school and is taking a class as SCC in assessment. This class works on study skills and developing techniques that will allow him to be successful in college. The plan is for him to start school in January. If it goes well with the SCC class, VR will then do a plan. His employer has been very accommodating since the accident.

Frank stated that this is an important group of people, those that have a physical disability do not have an advocacy group like of the other groups. There are lots of people going in and out of hospitals that have limitations due to accidents. The injury/disability could be a barrier to their working. This gives VR an opportunity to reach to that population and to others/other places around the state not just Madonna. To make VR visible, informing people that VR is a resource.

Jan works with those people that are close to being job ready, going to Madonna every week doing follow-up visits.

B. Employment Discussion Video (*Don Crouch/Kelli Funk*)

Kelli Funk is the Media Specialist for Voc Rehab. The video being viewed was made by VR staff—six VR counselors that volunteered their talent and three talented VR staff to portray the consumers. The volunteers were briefed as to their disability/impairment and as to how they were to portray their character. The video demonstrates how to do the Employment Discussion. The tape is being used to train new staff.

Another DVD that has been completed is called “Questions” this is for staff to help staff in handling the following situations

- Hallucination
- Alcohol
- No Shows
- Poor Hygiene
- Sex Offenders
- Threatening Behavior
- Transients

C. Annual Report Update (*Sandy Ham*)

Sandy has everyone's report except Frank's. We will be on time this year. She will bring a draft and to pass around at the next meeting. She stated she would have to wait for the financial section/data until that is available in QUEST.

D. No Cost Services (*Frank Lloyd/Don Crouch*)

The order of selection comes into play when the money becomes tight. Right now the top two groups are being served immediately. If money got tight the second priority group would end up on the waiting list.

The Federal partners believe that VR should not serve anyone on the list until they fully serve those listed before that time. This means that if the second person only needs partial assistance VR is unable to assist them until the first on the waiting list has a plan written.

Frank thinks it is possible that order of selection will hit VR next year. This could create problems with VR's mental health contracts.

E. Purchasing Vehicles (*Frank Lloyd/Don Crouch*)

The question is whether VR is going to get into the business of buying vehicles for consumers. The interpretation that VR should be able to provide vehicles is coming from the Feds. VR does provide other assistive equipment. VR has only allowed the purchase of vehicles when it is necessary for self-employment.

Vicki has heard from Texas and the Feds were telling them they had to allow for the purchase of vehicles. There was a recent case from last week where the consumer lived far enough out, did not have transportation to help her get to employment. Questions raised were: what kind of car should VR be buying, can individual keep it maintained/insured?" Vicki stated: "maybe in some cases in the rural areas if that is what is standing in the way of employment, why not."

There might be an alternative—possibly the financial loan program through Easter Seals. VR will help with the payments until the consumer is stable or VR buys down the interest rate. VR needs to be in the role of providing support until the individual is able to take on the responsibility.

Vicki will watch and keep VR informed as to RSA's determination on Texas' vehicle policy. Vicki will also check on other states to see what their policy is on purchasing vehicles.

The Client Service Committee will take a look at VR's policy and role before a motion is brought before the council.

F. Employment Warranty (*Don Crouch*)

VR has a regular employment program that is the same as in every other state. We also have two other programs that the other states don't have; the Transition Program and Employment Warranty.

VR works with the individual helping them find the type of job that is the best for them. If they work with VR in the beginning, VR makes a warranty to them that they will be here for them if they want to come back.

If they reach the job goal and are working satisfactorily—we monitor them to see how well they are doing at 6 months, 1 year, 2 years, 3 years. We contact them each time to make sure they are being successful.

VR is planning to outsource this follow-up to another source outside of VR. This typically takes lots of staff time making these calls. Having one person doing it state wide, VR can be consistent in this process. VR has contracted with Joan Rouse, a former VR counselor. She will pilot this project at the Lincoln office doing all the employment follow-up and monitoring for us. If this works well, this will then go statewide.

Working Lunch (12:30 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.) Committee Meetings will start at 12:45

VII. Reports

A. CAP Report (*Vicki Rasmussen*)

The Regional CAP meeting for Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa and Missouri will be held in November in Kansas City.

An issue under review is the 60-day deadline on having all the paperwork completed before starting school. VR is putting together a video to explain to clients about post secondary and what is involved in planning for post secondary. VR is taking a look at how the consumers are being informed about the 60-day requirement and how to make this process understandable to them. Vicki asked if the council would support VR creating a video to explain to consumers about the 60-day requirement.

Consumers need to have the completed the application to the school and all financial paperwork done in order to get their PELL, etc. This needs to be done 60 days prior to when school starts. VR has had individuals come in two days before schools starts and didn't get to start as they didn't have enough time to get paperwork done. This is a safeguard to assure there is enough time to get the paperwork prepared and approved before school starts.

It is felt that consumers are not being told in a timely manner concerning the 60-day requirement. The video will help to assure that they are being informed consistently across the state. Vicki is working with Pat Bracken on this. ATP will also have a part in this video. This will be part of the planning process once the consumer chooses their goal.

Vicki motioned that VR should proceed putting together a video for consumers inform them about planning for post secondary education.

Merwyn seconded the motion. The motion was approved

B. SILC Report (*Alvin Fox*) No report

C. ATP Report (*Mark Schultz*)

ATP is helping VR to better serve students that are in transition with assistive technology. VR is supporting a pilot program involving two ATP staff that are working part time in Omaha and Kearney. They are working with those schools and the surrounding areas to provide greater awareness of assistive technology as they transition from school. Eligible transition students for ATP's assistance might not be VR candidates, but ATP could assist to help them in being successful in the community.

Materials are being developed concerning assistive technology and learning disabilities, multiple physical disabilities, classroom based solutions to name a few. ATP has developed AT4ALL (an on-line database) to track equipment in order to provide better utilization of the assistive devices that are available.

ATP is working on developing a flow chart to establish a process for connecting AAC users with appropriate resources. ATP's toll free number will be the initial contact and callers will be asked questions that use the flowchart to find the appropriate resource to assist them, including a list of vendors that provide technical support for that piece of equipment.

VR is also changing their process for assistive technology services. In the past VR staff would make a referral to ATP, ATP would conduct an assessment and then go back to the team with recommendations. After that ATP would not be involved and never knew whether the recommendations were implemented or not. In the new process, VR and ATP are working together to maximize their respective resources. ATP will have a more involvement in the delivery of assistive technology making sure it is installed correctly and everyone involved has the proper training. Referrals will still be made by VR staff to go to ATP for assessment. After assessing, ATP makes the recommendation that will go to the ATP funding coordinator to identify what resources are available. That information will be sent to VR to make the decision concerning their funding. VR and ATP will then coordinate authorizing the purchase. ATP will be accountable for the installation, training and the final inspection to make sure everything is in place. The goal is to provide a more timely service to create a better benefit for the consumer.

D. Committee Reports

1. Client Services Committee (*Les Kimmons*)

The committee spent time reviewing the survey that was done by staff at the state office, interviewing those consumers concerning the booklet and if it was of value to them. Vicki has copies of the responses. The committee was to go through the questions one at a time.

Around 150 consumers were selected to be surveyed. Jan and Sherry made the calls in addition to their regular job duties and were able to complete the survey in time for this meeting. This first round of surveying will give a baseline on how to evaluate future surveys. The goal was to find out if the booklet helped the consumer in identifying an employment goal. Jan and Sherry managed to interview 94 people. In reviewing the findings the committee asked if the booklet was reasonable, are there other questions that should be included.

The committee would like to conduct another review before the December meeting. They will review the current survey in more detail, creating a new tailored survey. Pearl commented that the committee needs to put together numbers to share with the VR staff. If there is a trend, then there needs to be a change.

Frank and Margy conducted a review of all VR offices going to each one systematically reviewing casework. They reviewed whether the booklet was being used and being used appropriately. One particular office, over 100 cases were reviewed and they were disappointed that there were many consumers in which the booklet was never presented to them or some of the activities were never completed. They plan on going to each of the teams verifying that staff are using the new materials and resources and will report their findings back to the council.

Frank stated that the law requires VR to develop a plan. Part of that plan is their priorities, concerns, work values, resources available, etc. This is part of their “informed choice.” VR sees the booklet confirming job goals, job expectations, setting a reasonable job goal, etc.

The committee will discuss the survey and the booklet in more detail in order to make suggestions to tweak it, looking at the consumer’s point of view. Is VR doing what they need to be doing. Also looking at this being used by seasonal staff versus new staff.

Motion was made by Les for Gayle Hahn to write a letter to Jan and Sherry thanking them for their hard work on the survey.

Motion seconded by Merwyn.

Motion was carried.

2. Employer Services Committee (*Mike Newman*)

Jim Coyle brought information to share with the committee. He has been working hard to increase the odds of VR consumers getting a job. Jim discussed employer hiring practices, even starting at the State hiring level. He has been doing research on the barriers that stop VR consumers from getting jobs and why they can’t even get an interview. Jim proposed research at the state level as to how we change that in the state of Nebraska. One reason is that they don’t have the experience, even though they have the skill, they still can’t seem to get an interview. This is especially true with the entry-level positions. It was stated that the state of Maine changed this through legislation.

The committee could also review how this affects students transitioning. They have the skill, but not the experience. Several states have adjusted their hiring practices to assist the disabled. In Nebraska we would have to make the change through legislation or a Governor's decree. Something that the State Rehabilitation Council could review and maybe make recommendations, get behind it and push the governor.

Jim shared with the committee a VR publication: Finding the job that Works for You. Putting Your Plan into Action. The committee thought it was an incredible piece of work. New staff can understand. This starts with completing the application process to how to handle inappropriate questions. It is a great product for anyone.

The complementary piece is the resume booklet. The committee felt this "hit the nail on the head." Resumes are real trendy and they go through different phases. This is excellent for the consumer base we serve.

The focus is on standardizing the quality of service in helping consumers find employment. These two products are user friendly, readily understandable and allows the counselor some flexibility.

Mark talked about doing ATP doing outreach with employers to create more opportunities. Specifically marking to employers to use ATP services through VR to get in the door. They would look at the individual in the workplace and assess why they are not performing as well as what they did in the past. To provide assistance to increase productivity levels.

Need to target individuals who have repetitive work injuries still trying to work at their job, but just not performing quite as well. Also those employees that may have an illness or injury that is non-work related. Working on marketing this ATP service to help employees stay in their job other than having them get to the point where they need VR services. Need to get out and identify individuals and identify technologies/services that the employee might benefit from. To create a better mode of communication with employers.

Jim is working with the committee to come up with the marketing strategies on marketing this service. A rough draft has been created. ATP will provide the technical support to employers and would make the referral back to VR when appropriate. Trying to get businesses to bring people to us. The aging workforce is becoming an issue. Employers can offer this as a service to employees at no cost. It is a win/win situation for employers and employee.

The committee felt this is a good idea. Should they pursue it? They have no idea the demand for this type of service.

Jim made a motion before the council to create a project to pilot this program, marketing it to employers. The project that would focus on the providing Assistive Technology Services to employees in the workplace.

Alvin seconded the motion. The motion was approve.

3. Transition Services Committee (*Jack*)

The new materials that have been implemented, created some changes in policy/procedures and in how staff are doing their job. A draft survey will be put together by the subcommittee to send educators to assess their understanding of VR and will be brought to the December meeting for the committee to review. It will be in electronic format going out to guidance counselors, school nurses, directors, etc., to help identify their relationship with VR, what is effective and what is not.

Larry motioned that the transition subcommittee develop a draft survey instrument for educators seeking their feedback regarding their working relationship with VR. Mark motioned that ATP be added to the survey instrument.

Marc seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

The committee discussed the “Teammates Project” and VR’s working relationship with the Youth Rehabilitation and Training Centers in Geneva and Kearney. VR will formalized a process on how our staff can work with the students in those facilities and help them transition back to their school and into the community/employment.

VR is working with staff at YRTC helping them understand VR and how we can help. when transitioning students into the community and to employment. VR is also taking a look at why kids will work with staff in the transition program, but then won’t want to work with them in the adult program. There is a higher drop out rate when they make the adult program.

State Staff is scheduled for October 25, 26 & 27th at the Kearney Holiday Inn. If you are interested in attend, please contact Cheryle and she will make arrangements.

Cheryle will email the agenda to council members. Add that you are invited. Look at expenses covered for the conference.

Mark motioned the meeting adjourn. Kipp seconded the motion. Motion approved.